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RESEARCH

MONTANA CHRISTMAS TREE SHIPMENTS DOWN IN 1952

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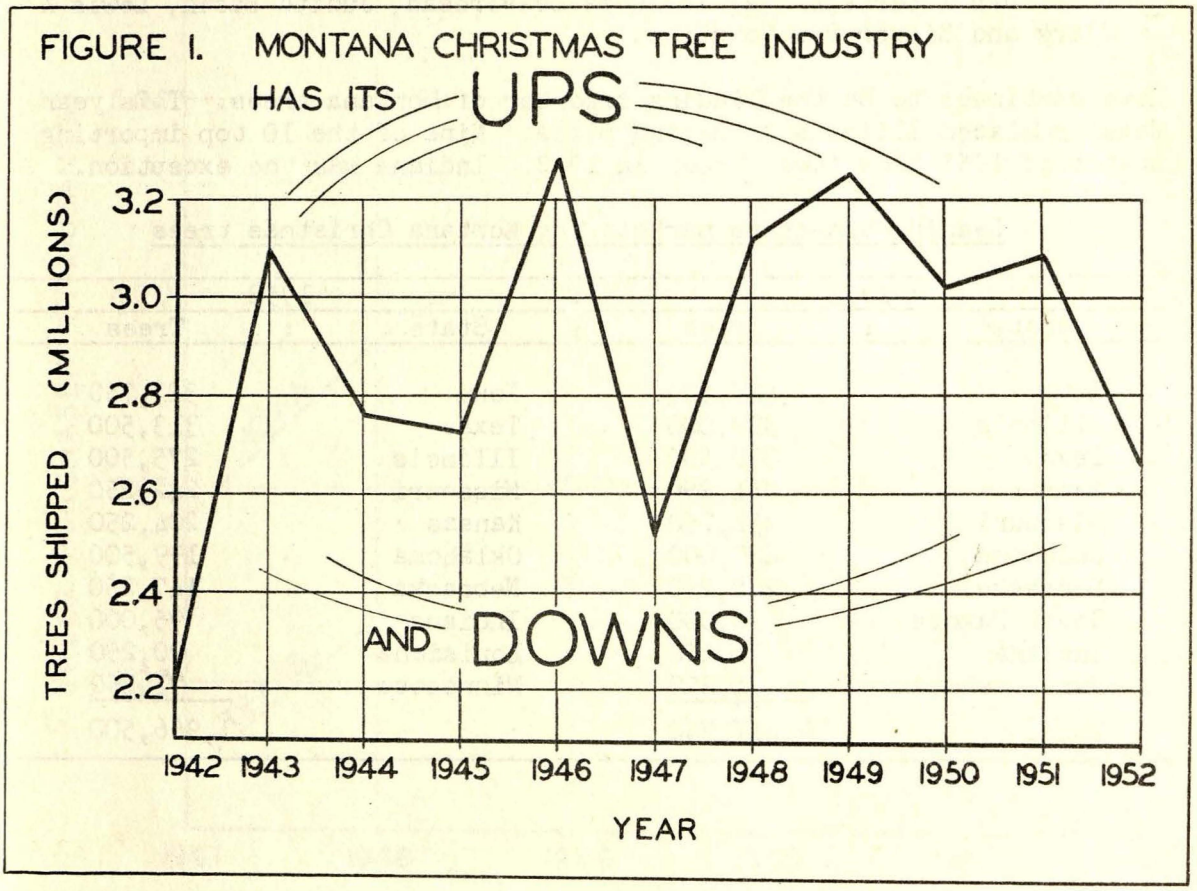
Montana shipped fewer Christmas trees in 1952 than in any one of the four previous years. The 2,644,600-tree total was 14 percent below the 3,084,540 trees shipped in 1951 and 20 percent below the peak year of 1946. While Christmas tree production in Montana fluctuated widely over the years, shipments for the period 1948 to 1951 were more or less stable. The 1952 drop contrasts sharply with this 4-year trend.

FIGURE 1. MONTANA CHRISTMAS TREE INDUSTRY HAS ITS UPS AND DOWNS



Flathead, Lincoln, Missoula, and Lake Counties provided 90 percent of the trees shipped. Flathead County continues to lead other counties but only 38 percent of this year's shipments originated there as compared to 46 percent in 1951. Missoula, Granite, and Powell were the only important Christmas tree-producing counties that exported more trees in 1952 than in 1951.

Comparison of Christmas trees shipped 1951 to 1952 - Montana

County	1951	1952	Change 1951 to 1952
	--Number of trees--		Percent
Flathead	1,417,150	1,003,300	- 29
Lincoln	953,680	843,900	- 12
Missoula	185,000	382,300	+107
Lake	285,350	156,900	- 45
Granite	100,950	106,700	+ 6
Ravalli	83,860	80,800	- 4
Sanders	55,820	55,600	1/
Powell	2,000	11,800	+490
Mineral	-	2,300	-
Other 2/	730	1,000	+ 37
Total	3,084,540	2,644,600	- 14

1/ Less than 1 percent. 2/ Includes Beaverhead, Judith Basin, Lewis & Clark and Silver Bow Counties.

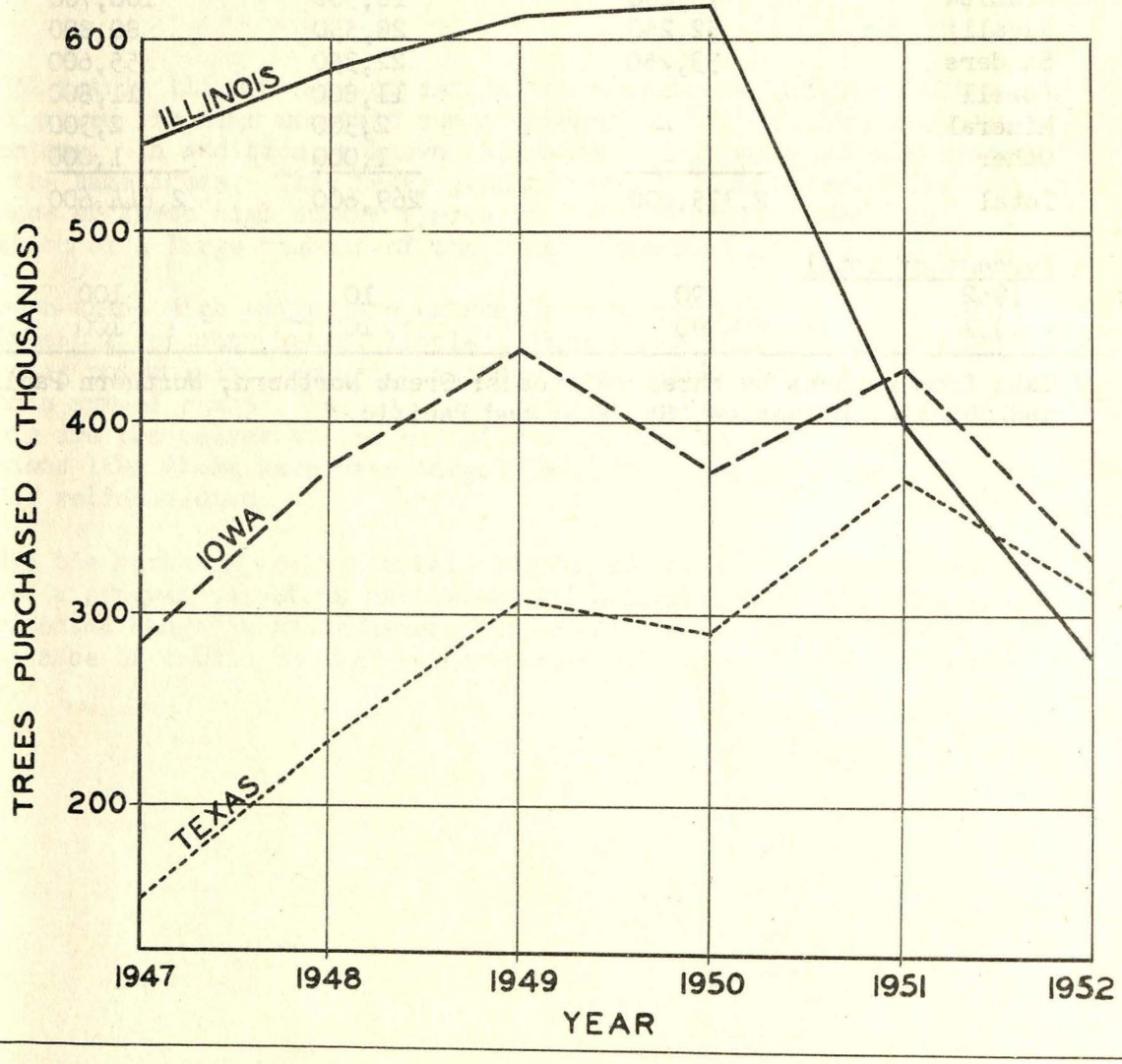
Iowa continues to be the leading importer of Montana trees. This year Texas replaced Illinois in second place. Nine of the 10 top importing states of 1951 took fewer trees in 1952. Indiana was the exception.

Leading ten-state markets for Montana Christmas trees

1951		1952	
State	Trees	State	Trees
Iowa	427,500	Iowa	327,750
Illinois	399,000	Texas	313,500
Texas	370,500	Illinois	275,500
Kansas	261,250	Missouri	242,250
Missouri	251,750	Kansas	204,250
Oklahoma	247,000	Oklahoma	199,500
Nebraska	242,250	Nebraska	147,250
South Dakota	76,000	Indiana	95,000
Indiana	71,250	Louisiana	90,250
North Dakota	71,250	Minnesota	71,250
Total	2,417,750		1,966,500

State markets have varied widely from year to year. For example, Illinois took 617,500 Montana Christmas trees in 1950 and only 275,500 in 1952. The following graph shows the fluctuations in the three leading state markets since 1947. These marketing fluctuations along with those in production indicate that the Montana industry is unstable. This instability is perhaps due in part to the lack of quality control in marketing Christmas trees, and partly to the lack of permanently organized Christmas tree harvesting businesses.

FIGURE 2. THREE LEADING STATE MARKETS FOR MONTANA CHRISTMAS TREES REFLECTS INSTABILITY



The drop in exports affected both rail and truck shipments proportionally with each getting the same percentage of the business as in 1951.

Christmas tree shipments by railroad and truck - 1952

County	Rail shipments 1/	Truck shipments	Total shipments
		-Number of trees-	
Flathead	926,250	77,050	1,003,300
Lincoln	783,800	60,100	843,900
Missoula	342,000	40,300	382,300
Lake	147,250	9,650	156,900
Granite	90,200	16,500	106,700
Ravalli	52,250	28,550	80,800
Sanders	33,250	22,350	55,600
Powell	-	11,800	11,800
Mineral	-	2,300	2,300
Other	-	1,000	1,000
Total	2,375,000	269,600	2,644,600
Percent of total			
1952	90	10	100
1951	90	10	100

1/ Data from reports by three railroads: Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific.